

Weekly Column for October 18, 2007

This morning the City held a press conference to announce a new partnership with Habitat for Humanity, and we could not be more excited.

In an effort to restore, stabilize and revitalize our housing stock we have formed a new partnership with Habitat for Humanity.

The first project will take place at 229 4th Street, which is being taken down today with a combination of hand and machine. We are saving as many bricks as possible, as well as maintaining the façade so that it may be used on the home that is to be built there.

The building has been a menace to the Little Italy neighborhood for a number of years, and despite our efforts to find someone to rehabilitate it, it was not to be. We met with the Troy Little Italy group Wednesday night to discuss the project, and to garner their support for moving forward with plans to replace the building - which was lost to fire nearly a decade ago.

The City's collaboration with the affordable housing developer will begin with a construction project of a single-family home that will be sold to an income eligible family. We will fund Habitat for the cost needed to build the home, estimated at \$75,000. Habitat relies on partnerships with businesses and corporations to fund the costs of construction materials and maintains affordability by using volunteer labor for every home they build.

Steve Haggerty, the Executive Director at Capital District Habitat for Humanity, said today that, "The City of Troy is clearly a municipality concerned about the stock of vacant and abandoned buildings and Mayor Tutunjian has expressed his interest in a long-term partnership with Habitat for Humanity for the purpose of enabling people with limited incomes to enter the economic mainstream through affordable homeownership."

Through the Habitat model, vacant buildings, once rehabbed are sold to families with zero-percent interest loans and ultimately returned to the tax roles.

This is not the first project that Capital District Habitat for Humanity has undertaken in Troy. It is currently providing construction management on the Habitat project at 135 11th Street. It is however, the first time we have entered into a partnership with long-term goals.

One of the main goals of my second term will be to continue to reduce the number of vacant properties in the City of Troy, which has dropped dramatically in the past four years through investment and removal. I believe that Habitat can help in that goal, and City staff is completing a list of buildings that can be worked on next.

Habitat has an excellent reputation and we believe that the relationship we have formed with them will be long lasting and provide a great benefit to Troy residents moving forward.

For those that don't know, Habitat for Humanity is a not-profit housing partnership dedicated to building simple, decent and affordable housing for low-income families in need. Habitat uses volunteer labor and donations of money and materials to provide affordable homeownership to people who would not otherwise have the opportunity. Habitat creates systemic social change by giving the economically disenfranchised the tools necessary to break the cycle of poverty.

Have a great weekend!

Harry J Tutunjian
Mayor of Troy